

## Health and Safety in Facilities

Quality early care and education programs in Rhode Island are on a continuous improvement path that is informed by Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) licensing regulations; Department of Education Basic Education Program (BEP) regulations; BrightStars Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Standards; and Department of Education Comprehensive Early Childhood Education (CECE) Program Standards for Approval. The graphics below illustrate the state's quality continuum for center-based programs, family child care programs, and school-based programs. Larger versions of the graphics can be found in *Appendix A*.

This Tip Sheet provides information on the requirements related to **health and safety in facilities** for children in early care and education programs in Rhode Island.

### Center-based Programs



### Family Child Care Programs



### School-based Programs



Keeping children safe is the foundational principle of a quality early care and education system. A program's facility (both the indoor and outdoor physical environments) plays a key role in the overall health and safety of children in a program and can have a profound impact on a child's daily experience.

In 2014, Rhode Island conducted an assessment of the needs of its early learning facilities. The resulting report, the *Rhode Island Early Learning Facilities Needs Assessment*, documented the overall condition of the physical spaces that are part of Rhode Island's early childhood infrastructure and discussed priorities for improvement. The report can be viewed under "Resources" at the Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund (RICCELFF) website: [www.riccelff.org](http://www.riccelff.org).

Rhode Island's early learning community values healthy and safe physical space as crucial to a child's overall well-being and understands the importance of ensuring that the spaces in which the state's youngest children are educated are safe and in good repair. *Caring for our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs* ([nrckids.org](http://nrckids.org)) provides the most comprehensive and available set of standards related to health and safety in early care and education. This publication contains 686 national standards that represent the best evidence, expertise, and experience in the country on

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quality health and safety practices and policies that should be followed in today's early care and education settings.<sup>1</sup>

Rhode Island's 2013 DCYF licensing regulations that relate to the health and safety of the physical environment are derived in large part from these national standards. The following requirements are foundational when considering the health and safety of an early care and education facility:

- The absence of hazards in the environment
- Adequate lighting and ventilation
- Spaces in good repair
- Appropriate climate control
- Safe outdoor play spaces
- Sufficient square footage for each child
- Safe emergency egress
- Secure storage for hazardous materials
- Space that enhances not detracts from safe supervision
- Building security
- The presence of an emergency preparedness plan

This list is a broad overview of the types of issues programs should be aware of when evaluating indoor and outdoor spaces. Additional aspects of a physical space that can have a profound impact on the overall quality of a program include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Location of bathrooms and sinks
- Types and quantity of lighting
- Configuration of classroom spaces
- Noise levels within spaces
- Ability in the classroom to see directly outdoors and between spaces
- Ability to access outdoor play space directly from the classroom
- Presence of quality spaces for gross motor movement, both indoors and outdoors
- Sufficient access to organized storage
- Sufficient spaces for adult planning and meetings
- The provision of more than the minimally required square feet per child

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<sup>1</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. 2011. *Caring for our children: National health and safety performance standards; Guidelines for early care and education programs. 3rd edition.* Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; Washington, DC: American Public Health Association; p. xvii. Available at <http://nrckids.org>.

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Good practice includes regular checks of the physical environment to identify hazards and to create corrective action plans to address such hazards. Center administrators should develop and monitor systems to ensure routine safety checks, and center staff should assume responsibility for maintaining safe classroom environments and practices and for reporting any identified hazards immediately to the program administrator.

**Rhode Island's 2013 DCYF Child Care Program Regulations for Licensure** include many requirements to ensure that physical environments are safe and well maintained. These regulations apply to both the indoor and the outdoor spaces of an early care and education setting. The physical environment is checked as part of DCYF's ongoing monitoring process for child care licensing. See *Appendix B* to view the DCYF regulations related to physical space and safety.



**BrightStars Standards** do not explicitly reference the health or safety of the physical environment. At Level 1 and above, BrightStars requires programs to comply with DCYF licensing regulations or BEP regulations regarding the learning environment. Programs seeking to reach Levels 3, 4, and 5 in the BrightStars rating system must have Environment Rating Scale (ERS) observations conducted, and the ERS tools include many indicators related to health and safety in the physical environment.

The **Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) 2013 CECE Program Standards for Approval** include the most stringent requirements for the health and safety of the indoor and outdoor early education environment, including consultations with the Rhode Island Department of Health's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). RIDE conducts a facilities review as part of the CECE approval process, at which time it assesses the overall health and safety of the indoor and outdoor physical environment. See *Appendix C* to view the CECE standards related to physical facilities.

Programs that need assistance in assessing their space, developing a plan to improve their space, or implementing a facility construction or improvement plan can access support through the Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund (RICCELFF). The RICCELFF is an innovative public-private partnership dedicated to expanding access to high-quality child care and early education opportunities throughout Rhode Island. The RICCELFF provides the capital and technical expertise that child care and early learning centers need to improve the quality and capacity of their physical space. The RICCELFF provides a combination of technical assistance, training, grant funding, and flexible financing for a wide range of indoor and outdoor projects, from minor center renovations to the construction of new state-of-the-art facilities. The RICCELFF can

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help your program develop a plan to assess and correct environmental issues impacting health and safety and quality in your center. The RICCELFF website provides access to publications and resource materials that can help guide center administrators and family child care providers in improving their physical space. Programs can access these resources by visiting [www.riccelff.org](http://www.riccelff.org).

## Resources to Extend Your Learning

- Center for Early Learning Professionals InfoLine: [www.center-elp.org](http://www.center-elp.org)
- Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund: [www.riccelff.org](http://www.riccelff.org)
- Caring for our Children: [cfoc.nrckids.org/index.cfm](http://cfoc.nrckids.org/index.cfm)
- National Program for Playground Safety (NPSS): [www.playgroundsafety.org](http://www.playgroundsafety.org)
- State of Rhode Island Department of Health OSHA Consultation Program: [www.health.ri.gov/programs/oshaconsultation/](http://www.health.ri.gov/programs/oshaconsultation/)
- US. Environmental Protection Agency Healthy Child Care Initiative: [www2.epa.gov/childcare?utm\\_source=News+from+RICCFF+April+2012&utm\\_campaign=Child+Care+e+News&utm\\_medium=archive](http://www2.epa.gov/childcare?utm_source=News+from+RICCFF+April+2012&utm_campaign=Child+Care+e+News&utm_medium=archive)

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## APPENDIX A

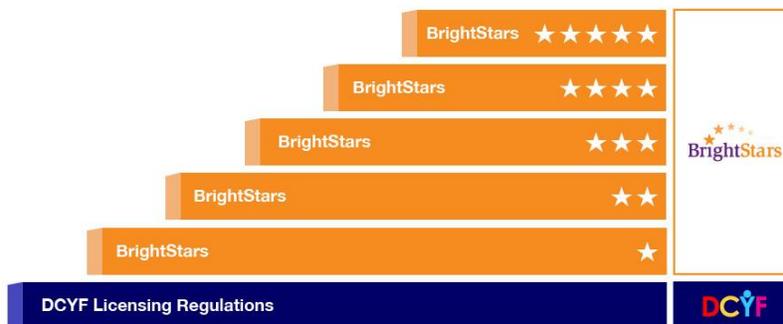
### Center-based Program Quality Continuum



### School-based Program Quality Continuum



### Family Child Care Program Quality Continuum



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## APPENDIX B

### DCYF Child Care Program Regulations for Licensure, November 2013

#### SECTION THREE - LICENSING STANDARDS

##### I. PHYSICAL SPACE AND SAFETY

###### A. Physical Facilities

1. The indoor and outdoor facilities foster the children's growth and development through a variety of opportunities for safe exploration and learning.
2. Prior to licensing, physical facilities:
  - a. comply with building, fire, health and sanitation codes;
  - b. provide evidence that the program and water source are lead free or lead safe;
  - c. provide evidence that the program is asbestos free or asbestos safe;
  - d. have an acceptable score on a radon test within the last three years; and
  - e. can accommodate children and adults with disabilities in accordance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).
3. Plans for the erection of new buildings or playgrounds or for the renovation or modification of existing buildings or playgrounds are submitted to the Department for review prior to the start of construction.
4. The program's exterior doors are locked.
  - a. The program's designated main entrance has a doorbell, buzzer, keypad, swipe card or other comparable means to control entry.
  - b. Unlocked doors are monitored at all times by a staff person.
5. Stairways used by children have a second railing placed at the appropriate height for the children's use.

###### B. Location of Child Care Rooms

1. Program rooms for infants and/or toddlers are located on the ground level where there is direct access to the outside without the use of stairs.
2. Program rooms for preschool children are permitted on the first or second floor.
3. If a classroom for preschoolers is located on the second floor, the evacuation plan is appropriate for children of that age and developmental ability.
4. All facilities, including classrooms, bathrooms, gross motor spaces and libraries used by the children, are located on the same floor level as the activity rooms or classrooms.
5. Facilities used by the children are not located below ground level.

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## C. Ventilation and Lighting

1. There is adequate ventilation and lighting throughout the program.
2. All activity rooms used for children have natural lighting through a window or a skylight directly to the outdoors.
3. Exterior doors and windows, which are opened for ventilation, are securely screened.
4. The temperature in rooms used by children is maintained within a range of 65 - 74 degrees F° at the level of the children's height, and the heat is kept constant.
5. Rooms where infants are cared for are maintained at a minimum of 68 degrees F° at crib height.
6. There is a minimum of 300 cubic feet of air space for each child.
7. Portable space heaters are prohibited.

## D. Square Footage

1. There is a minimum of forty-five square feet of usable floor space for each child in activity rooms or classrooms used for infant and/or toddler care.
2. There is a minimum of thirty-five square feet of usable floor space for each child in activity rooms or classrooms used for preschool children.
3. Program licensing capacity is determined by adding up the total capacity of approved groups for that program. Refer to Section III. Enrollment and Staffing, C. Staff/Child Ratio and Maximum Group Size.

## E. Classroom/Activity Room

1. Classrooms are separate areas with floor to ceiling walls.
2. If floor to ceiling walls are not possible, then classrooms areas may be partitioned with dividers, cubbies or bookcases of at least four feet in height, which are securely fastened to the floor or wall and completely separate groups of children.

## F. Infant and Toddler Space

1. Children under the age of three years have rooms or areas physically separate from those used by children three years and over.
2. Transition rooms or areas are permitted for children who are between thirty-three months and thirty-nine months of age.

## G. Areas

1. Indoor activity is clearly defined by spatial arrangement.
2. Space is subdivided into areas and is arranged to provide clear pathways for movement from one area to another, to separate noisy activities from quieter ones and to provide for visual supervision by staff.
3. Furniture is placed to ensure safety and ease of supervision.

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## H. Storage Space

1. There is adequate space for the storage of individual clothing with hooks at the children's level.
2. There is adequate storage space for equipment, including cots and blankets, materials, supplies and seasonal toys.

## I. Isolation Area

1. There is an isolation area equipped with a cot to accommodate a child who becomes ill.
2. This area is located near a lavatory and is visible to staff.
3. A sick child is isolated a minimum of three feet away from the other children.

J. There is a utility room, separate from the kitchen, with hot and cold water and storage space for cleaning equipment and supplies.

K. Space is provided for administrative and clerical functions.

## L. The Outdoor Play Area:

1. Is appropriately equipped for gross motor activity.
2. Has at least seventy-five square feet of space per child for at least 50% of the capacity of the program.
3. Is easily accessible with a plan for how the outdoor space is utilized to support quality programming and ensure safety.
4. Has a fence of at least four feet in height, erected on ground that is reasonably level, well-drained and free from hazards.
5. Climbing equipment, swings and large pieces of play equipment are securely anchored and maintained in good repair.
6. Outdoor equipment (including but not limited to swings, slides and climbing apparatus) is:
  - a. age and developmentally appropriate;
  - b. installed, maintained and used in accordance with manufacturers' specifications and instructions; and
  - c. approved by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission.
7. Cushioning materials such as mats, wood chips or sand are used under climbers, slides, revolving equipment or swings.
8. Organic cushioning is at least six inches in depth, if used.
9. The outdoor play area for infants and/or toddlers is separate from that used by older children.
10. Trampolines are prohibited.

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## M. Toilet Facilities

1. Programs serving children under the age of thirty-six months have one toilet and one sink for each group of twenty children.
2. Programs serving children three years and older have one toilet and one sink for each group of ten children.
3. Hand washing sinks have both warm and cold running water set to appropriate hand washing temperatures.
4. Water temperature is at least 60 degrees F° and does not exceed 120 degrees F°.
5. There is a diaper changing area and an adjacent adult hand washing sink with warm and cold running water for each group of twenty children under the age of three years.
6. Diaper changing areas and adult hand washing sinks are separate and apart from any food preparation area.
7. There are separate toilet facilities in the same building for staff.

## N. Drinking Water

1. Safe drinking water is available to children both indoors and outdoors at all times and is offered at intervals that are responsive to the needs of the individual children.
2. Children are encouraged to drink water throughout the day, especially before, during and after outdoor play.
3. Drinking water supplies are located in or near classrooms and playrooms.
4. Drinking cups are single-use and disposable, or reusable cups are used that are sanitized daily in a dishwasher with a sanitizing option.
5. The source of drinking water is separate from the lavatory.
6. Water fountains are not permitted in the child care program unless disposable single-use cups are used or the program provides an approved plan for the maintenance and sanitation of the water fountain.
7. Use of water fountains outside the licensed program is prohibited.

## O. Food Preparation Area

1. There is an equipped kitchen for food preparation when meals are prepared at the program.
2. When meals are not prepared at the program, there is an equipped food preparation area to be used exclusively for food handling and distribution including the preparation of snacks.
3. The kitchen or food preparation area is sanitary, well lit and orderly with adequate refrigeration temperatures of 41 F° or lower for refrigerator and zero F° or lower for freezer.
4. There is sufficient storage and appropriate handling of supplies.
5. The program has a dishwasher with a sanitizing option to sterilize dishes or only uses disposable options.

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## P. Cleanliness

1. All parts of the program and its premises are kept in good repair, clean, neat and free of hazards.
2. Any product used for cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting is United States Environmental Protection Agency registered and is used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
3. Any necessary maintenance is done when children are not present.
4. The following methods for preventing rodent and insect infestation are used:
  - a. thorough sanitation and proper screening;
  - b. use of insecticides and rodenticides in accordance with instructions on the label;
  - c. structure blocking of avenues through which insects and rodents could gain access to the building; and
  - d. insecticides and rodenticides approved by the Rhode Island Department of Health.
5. All equipment and materials are clean and sanitary and checked regularly.

## Q. Telephone

1. There is a telephone, other than a pay phone, conveniently located within the program.
2. The telephone is functional and readily available for use in case of an emergency.
3. Emergency phone numbers, including 911, local fire and police departments, emergency treatment facility, consulting physician or nurse and poison control center are posted in a conspicuous place adjacent to the phone.
4. Staff do not use personal cell phones while supervising children.

## R. Furniture

1. Is sufficient in quantity to accommodate the number of children enrolled.
2. Is safe, durable, child-sized and easily cleaned.
3. Conforms to all applicable safety regulations.
4. Is sufficient to ensure that seating is provided for every child.

## S. Cots and Cribs

1. A crib is provided for each infant (birth to eighteen months). Infants may never use a cot.
2. A cot or a full size crib is provided for each toddler (age eighteen to thirty-six months).
3. A cot is provided for each preschool child (age three to five).
4. There is one crib equipped with wheels for every five children under two years. This crib is used for evacuation in the event of an emergency.
5. Cribs and cots are washed and sanitized before reassignment to another child.
6. There is at least two feet of space between each cot and/or crib during nap/rest time.
7. The program maintains proof onsite that each crib used meets the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission Standards for baby cribs.
8. Pack-in-plays, playpens and other portable cribs are not permitted.

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## T. Infant Equipment

1. The infant area contains comfortable seating for staff, including at least one rocking chair.
2. The program ensures availability of an adequate supply of clean diapers, bed linens and clothing changes.
3. The program has a choke prevention gauge which is used to determine if an object is large enough so as not to be swallowed by a child.
4. The use of walkers is prohibited.
5. Baby corrals and play-yards are prohibited.

## U. Dual Occupancy

1. It is preferable that the premises not be shared by other groups when the program is not in operation. However, with sufficient safeguards for cleanliness, protection of equipment and sanitation, dual occupancy may be permitted.
2. A formal request for approval for shared use of the premises is appended to the application.

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## APPENDIX C

### RIDE Comprehensive Early Childhood Education (CECE) Program Standards for Approval of Preschool and Kindergarten Programs, 2013

#### III. STANDARDS FOR SCHOOLS AND AGENCIES

##### STRUCTURAL STANDARDS

##### Standard One: Physical Facilities

- 1.1 It is expected that the early childhood program will comply with either DCYF Licensing Regulations or, if the program is located in a public or private PK-12 school, with RIDE Basic Education Program Regulations, G-14-4 Ensuring a Safe and Healthy Physical Environment, in addition to these standards listed below.
- 1.2 A **program** is defined as a classroom or set of classrooms which are managed using the same overarching policies and procedures, with a shared leadership team. It may be housed in one building or multiple sites.
- 1.3 A **classroom** is defined as a group of children in a room with floor to ceiling walls. If floor to ceiling walls are not possible, then stable partitions of at least 4 feet in height shall divide the classroom, separate groups of children as defined in Standard 3.4, and sound shall not exceed:

| <u>Area</u>               | <u>Acceptable Noise Levels in Decibels</u> |
|---------------------------|--|
| Classrooms (up to 750 sf) | 40 max                                     |
| Classrooms (over 750 sf)  | 35 max                                     |

- 1.4 **Physical facilities** must be:
- Inspected and certified by OSHA,
  - Be in compliance with building and fire codes,
  - Provide evidence of being lead free or safe,
  - Provide evidence of being asbestos-free or safe,
  - Have an acceptable score on a radon test within the last 3 years, and
  - Have a public water supply or a Department of Health certificate related to a water supply of drinking water quality.
- 1.5 There shall be an appropriately equipped, accessible **outdoor play area for gross motor activity**. The outdoor play area shall have at least 75 square feet of space for at least 50% of the capacity of the center each child and be easily accessible from adjacent to the center. With one classroom, the play area shall have at least 75 square feet per child. It shall be safe, properly fenced with fencing of at least four (4) feet in height, reasonably level, well-drained, and free from hazards.

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Surfaces and equipment shall comply with the Handbook for Public Playground Safety. Climbing equipment, swings, and large pieces of play equipment shall be developmentally appropriate for the ages of children in that area, securely anchored, and maintained in good repair. Cushioning materials such as rubber surfacing, wood chips, or sand shall be used under climbers, slides, or swings. If organic cushioning (i.e. sand, wood chips, etc.) is used, it shall be of at least 9" in depth.

Outdoor play areas for preschoolers shall be separated by fencing or scheduling from those used by children of first grade age and above. Outdoor play areas for kindergarteners may be in the same area used for preschoolers, first and/or second graders but shall be separated by fencing or scheduling from those used by children in the third grade or higher grades.

- 1.6 It is recommended that accessible **toilet facilities** be in or immediately adjacent to the classroom; if not, the program shall provide a plan that addresses how toileting will be supervised while classroom staff adult/child ratios are maintained. Facilities shall have one toilet and one sink for each group of 10 children. Hand washing sinks shall have 1) warm and cold running water faucets or 2) one temperature faucets set at appropriate hand washing temperatures. Hot water temperature at sinks used for handwashing, or where the hot water will be in direct contact with children, should be at a temperature of at least 60°F and not exceeding 120°F, according to the most recent information in *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care, A Joint Collaborative Project of the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care.*

There shall be separate toilet facilities in the same building for staff.

- 1.7 There shall be **adequate ventilation and natural and/or artificial lighting** throughout the program facility.
- Each room used for instructional purposes shall have sufficient air changes to produce healthful conditions and to avoid odors or concentrations of toxic substances or dust particles.
  - All rooms used for children shall have a window or skylight directly to the outdoors.
  - The Illuminating Engineering Society of North America standards for the quantity of illumination, Lighting for Educational Facilities RP-3-00, should be met in general classrooms.
  - Emergency lighting shall be available when normal lighting systems fail and in locations that permit an orderly egress from the building in an emergency situation
- 1.8 There shall be **designated adult space** with adult-size furniture for functions such as planning, meeting privately with parents, storage of staff materials, breaks, etc.
- 1.9 A **cot** shall be provided for each preschool child for programs that are **more than 4 hours in length**. Cots shall be washed and sanitized before reassignment to another child. There shall be at least two (2) feet of space between each cot during rest time.

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1.10 All **equipment and materials** shall be kept clean and sanitary and shall be checked monthly to ensure they are free from hazards. Documentation of monthly inspections, and program response, should be maintained on file.

*The following standards apply to public school programs. Child care centers in good standing with DCYF's 2013 Child Care Center Regulations are presumed to meet these requirements.*

1.11 **Stairways** used by children shall have a handrail with a maximum height of 48 inches for children's use.

1.12 The program's **exterior doors** shall be locked, unless monitored by a staff person, at all times. The program's designated main entrance(s) shall have a doorbell, buzzer, keypad, swipe card or other comparable means for entrance.

1.13 There shall be space for the **storage of each child's clothing** at appropriate levels for the use of children.

1.14 There shall be adequate **storage space for equipment**, including cots and blankets, materials, supplies and seasonal toys.

1.15 There shall be a sufficient quantity of **furniture** in the center to accommodate the number of children to be enrolled. Furniture shall be safe, durable, child-sized and easily cleaned. It shall conform to all applicable safety regulations. Seating shall be provided for every child.

1.16 There shall be a minimum of 35 square feet of **usable floor space** for each child in classrooms or activity rooms.